

Thomson (M.S.)

A LECTURE

BEING ONE OF A

COURSE ON MATERIA MEDICA,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

STUDENTS

OF THE

Reform Medical College of Ga.,

BY

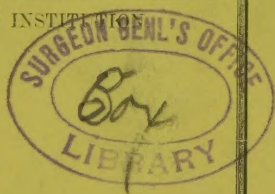
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M. S. THOMSON, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF OBSTETRICS, DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND MATERIA MEDICA, IN THAT INSTITUTION.

—♦♦—
MACON:

GEORGIA TELEGRAPH STEAM POWER PRESS.

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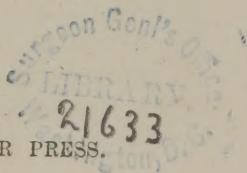
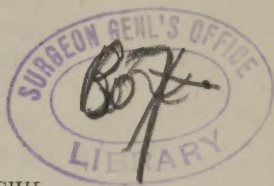
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A LECTURE

OF THE USE OF MATERIA MEDICA.

STUDENTS.

Delivered at the Medical College of Georgia.



J. M. FORD, M.D.

LECTURER ON THE MATERIA MEDICA.

MACON:

W. H. BARNES, PRINTER.

1887.

CORRESPONDENCE.

REFORM MEDICAL COLLEGE, }
MACON, GA., Nov. 25th, 1857. }

Prof. M. S. THOMSON, M. D.—

Honored Sir:—We, the Committee appointed by the class, earnestly solicit for publication, a copy of your very able lecture delivered before the students on Monday, 23d inst. We sincerely hope you will accede to their request, as we think that in it is pointed out the proper attitude that Reformers should assume towards Allopathy.

T. J. LEVERETT, Ch'n.	} Committee.
J. A. WATSON,	
G. G. OSBORNE, JR.,	
J. W. JOHNSON,	
J. M. TURK,	
T. M. HARBIN,	

MACON, 25th Nov., 1857.

GENTLEMEN :—In reply to the request of the class conveyed by you for a copy for publication of the Lecture I delivered before them on the 23d inst., permit me to say, that though it was got up simply as a part of my regular course, yet, if you deem its publication expedient, or likely to be productive of any good to the cause, the advancement of which we all have so much at heart, I place it at your disposal, and remain with much respect,

Your's truly,

M. S. THOMSON.

To T. J. LEVERETT,	} Committee.
J. A. WATSON, JR.,	
G. G. OSBORNE,	
J. W. JOHNSON,	
J. M. TURK,	
T. M. HARBIN,	

LIBRARY

WELLS MEDICAL COLLEGE
Wells, Nov. 20th 1857

My dear Sir, - The Committee appointed by the
Faculty of Medicine, in the year 1856, to
prepare a report on the progress of the
College, have the honor to acknowledge the
receipt of your letter of the 19th inst., and
in reply to inform you that the same has
been forwarded to the proper authorities
for their consideration.

Yours truly,

- T. M. WATSON
- J. M. TARK
- A. W. JOHNSON
- G. W. OSBORN
- T. J. LEVETT

WELLS, Nov. 20th 1857.

My dear Sir, - In reply to the request of the class
for a copy of the report of the Faculty of
Medicine, I have the honor to inform you
that the same has been forwarded to the
proper authorities for their consideration.
I have the honor to be, Sir, your
obedient servant.

M. S. THOMSON

- T. M. WATSON
- J. M. TARK
- A. W. JOHNSON
- G. W. OSBORN
- T. J. LEVETT

LECTURE FIFTH.

Particular Emetics.

GENTLEMEN :—Having, in my last Lecture on *Materia Medica*, treated of Emetics at considerable length, in a general sense, it now devolves upon me in pursuing the subject, to speak of Particular Emetics. In classifying emetics some divide them into those derived from the mineral and those obtained from the vegetable kingdom. Others divide them into *specific* and *topical*.

In these lectures it is my purpose to say but little relative to medicines of any kind that are obtained from the mineral kingdom, and less than even that of those that are of an *emetic* character. I shall commend or condemn the use of the various articles that shall be brought under notice, and give my reasons either for the one or the other, as my judgment shall dictate. I shall endeavor to be as plain and particular as possible in describing and presenting such articles as I shall recommend you to use ; such as I shall warn you against, I shall dismiss as briefly as a fair and candid statement will allow.

Our *Materia Medica* is mainly derived from the vegetable kingdom, consisting of articles the most innoxious of their classes that are well known to be efficient in the cure of disease, at the same time that they are possessed of no poisonous qualities that tend to the destruction of human life ; such indeed as when taken into the stomach may be assimilated to the uses of the system, when they are not required by it in their specific capacity as medicines. I shall therefore treat mostly of vegetable medicines, and in speaking of Emetics, shall consider them as *specific* and *topical*.

There is a marked difference observable between the actions or operations of the various articles that are known to produce emesis. Some produce an emetic effect, without even being taken into the stomach ; such articles are classed as *specifics*. Others excite emesis when taken into the stomach, and in no other way ; these are said to act *Topically*.

Specific emetics may produce vomiting by being injected into the bowels, rubbed upon the skin, or applied by way of plaster or poultice to the surface of the body. They are thought to depend, in producing this effect, upon being absorbed into the circulation, acting on the brain through the medium of the nerves, which, through the same medium acts by a reflex action upon the stomach, so as to produce emesis.

Lobelia, Ipecachuana and Tobacco will operate in this way, and for this reason the first of these, especially, is held to be most valuable as a remedial agent, particularly in cases of Lock-jaw, Epilepsy, &c., where it becomes almost impossible to administer medicines in the usual way. Specific emetics have a very extensive and decided influence over the general system, and when remote effects in chronic diseases, or even in acute cases, are designed to be produced, these are the agents resorted to. Their operation is attended with great relaxation of the general system, as well as much sickness and nausea of the stomach, and hence they are better adapted than topical emetics for the treatment of febrile and inflammatory affections generally.

Of these specific emetics, then, and in fact of all emetics, Lobelia takes the precedence, and is justly entitled to be first considered.

There are three kinds or species of Lobelia known to the Profession, viz : Lobelia *Cardinalis*, Lobelia *Syphilitica*, and Lobelia *Inflata*. The last mentioned is the Thomsonian emetic herb, and is the article to which I now specially invite your attention.

Lobelia Inflata is a biennial plant growing, according to soil, from 8 to 30 inches high. It has an erect, branched, milky stem, on which the leaves alternate, being also milky, of an oval, oblong shape, acute at the end, with edges jagged with unequal indentations. The flowers are scattered as it were along the branches, being small and of a pale blue color. The seed vessels are a small oblong roundish pod, which, in the opinion of Dr. Samuel Thomson, bears some resemblance to the human stomach. The seeds themselves are very numerous, very minute, and of a brownish black color, having some resemblance to the seed of the common tobacco. In most parts of the United States, the *Lobelia Inflata* is a common plant, though in the pine regions of Georgia, Florida and South and North Carolina, it will not grow or flourish. In the upper parts of Georgia and South Carolina and surrounding regions, it grows spontaneously and in great abundance. It grows most abundantly in stubble fields, especially the next season after the crop has been gathered. It is rarely found in the woods.

The plant being biennial, throws out the first year only a few radical roundish leaves, laying close to the ground; the next year the stem, branches, leaves and seed are produced. The leaves and roots of the first year are said to be as powerful as the mature plant, excepting the seeds, which are known to be strongest and most uniformly reliable as an emetic. When green, the juice that exudes from the broken plant is of a milky, acrid character, very penetrating and diffusible, giving good evidence of its powers when it reaches maturity.

The *Genus* *Lobelia* was dedicated to Lobel, an eminent German Botanist, who flourished at an early period when that science was yet in its infancy.

Shæpf was the first writer that noticed the officinal *Lobelia*, but from the fact that he considered it an astringent, we infer that he knew but little about its medicinal qualities.

It is on all sides admitted, I believe, that the aborigines of the country, the real native Americans, were acquainted with some of its virtues before the time of the great Thomson, but there is no doubt that to him are we indebted, as I intimated on a former occasion, for the introduction of Lobelia into the *Materia Medica*, as an article having defined properties, known to be suited for especial purposes.

Perhaps no article that ever was introduced into the *Materia Medica*, has met with so many obstacles as this same Lobelia, and from present indications, no other article has ever obtained, or is likely to achieve such a signal triumph over its enemies.

Gallileo, the discoverer of the pendulum, was imprisoned by the Inquisition, who sought to crush the truths he taught at the same time that they persecuted him; but the truths of science that owned him for their discoverer, survived and lived after him, and will continue to live in ages yet to come. So in like manner has Thomson been abused, and the truths that he taught been subjected to the fiery ordeal of persecution, and have emerged and are emerging, purified of their dross, and all the brighter for the test. Laboring as Lobelia did under the misfortune of being discovered by an unlettered farmer outside of the regularly recognized Medical Profession, it had to make its own way in society, without the adventitious aid of what might be considered a proper introduction. Having no letters, it was looked upon as an impostor, shunned by the elite, kicked by the crowd, and derided by the vulgar. Depending on its real merits, however, like many a poor young man, on entering life, it made its way, making a friend here and another there, curing a case in this township, and another in that, until men's minds began gradually to perceive and appreciate its value, so that from the time it vomited a laborer in the green meadows of New Hampshire to the present hour, it has been growing in popular favor, and widening the sphere of its healing influ-

ence, until millions of men are now convinced that as a medicine it has no superior in the whole *Materia Medica*. The day of its triumph has indeed already come; it now scouts the fear of prison walls and dungeons for its votaries, and asks from the law a fair field and no especial favors; standing forth before the world a living monument of its own virtues, a fair example to be placed before the young, as conveying the great and important lesson that inherent merit, traduce and calumniate it as you may, must and will succeed.

Considering the prominent place that this article holds in the new *Materia Medica*, it will perhaps be proper that I should enter somewhat minutely into its history, as well as describe to you its general characteristic effects and properties as a medicine.

As just intimated, *Lobelia Inflata* was first introduced as a reliable article of medicine, by a plain, illiterate, New England Farmer, named Samuel Thomson, who, through the failure of Allopathic Physicians to relieve or cure certain cases of sickness in his family, was compelled to resort to his own resources, to obtain and afford them relief.—These resources were an astute, enquiring mind, strong common sense, and a little knowledge of herbs, obtained in part, from an old woman, when a boy, and in part from accidentally discovering this same article, the subject of our Lecture, and through curiosity, picking and chewing some of the pods. He discovered thus that it would vomit, and afterwards, through mischief, used to induce the other boys to chew it, that by way of sport he might see them vomit.

When he arrived at manhood he played the same trick on his neighbor who was mowing with him in the field, and gave him a sprig of it to eat. It acted in that case as a powerful relaxant, depriving him of the power to walk, and as an emetic, evacuating the stomach of about two quarts; producing much trembling and profuse perspiration. At first he imagined that Thomson had killed him,

but in two hours afterwards he ate a hearty dinner, and acknowledged subsequently that he never had had anything to do him so much good in his life. This circumstance gave the immortal Thomson the first idea of the great medical virtues of Lobelia, and from that time forward it became his right hand reliance in combating disease, and had the honor of ranking among his celebrated numbers as number One.

Having been successful in curing those cases in his own family, he began to estimate the merits of Allopathic physicians at their true value, and being of an independent turn of mind, was not particularly solicitous of seeking to retain their good opinion, but in opposition to their interests, commenced the treatment of other cases, generally such as they had given over to the tender mercies of the grim king of terrors, and cured them also. This to them became alarming—it endangered their craft by which they gained their living and their wealth, and they were not slow in doing their best endeavors to put him down. War was therefore at once declared, and has been raging ever since. Had Thomson but been one of *them*, how easy would it have been to fall into line, and follow him, as they were in the habit of following every erratic theorist till experience taught the fallacy of his doctrines! But no, he was only the plain, illiterate farmer, and it would have been a lowering of their dignity to admit that he, in anything, could teach them. The only course left therefore was to denounce him as a quack, an impostor, a murderer even, and his great remedy the worst of poisons. From this sprung that determined opposition to the introduction to the *Materia Medica* of that most valuable agent, Lobelia, and to this opposition are we indebted in some sense for what we know now of that invaluable plant. In former days it was said, that “the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church.” In our day, the same may almost be said in regard to Medical Reform, for like the Mustard bush, the more it has been beaten and trampled

on, the more it has grown, and there is no doubt that this opposition has been eminently useful in bringing into notice this favorite remedy, as well as the truths of that great system of which a knowledge of it forms so prominent a part.

In this sense it is pleasant for an old Reformer to dwell upon the short-sightedness of the opponents of this valuable agent, and its co-remedies. While they were moving heaven and earth as it were, to put it down, and resorting to the strong arm of the law for aid, invoking the action of every Legislature in the country to sustain them by their enactments, and hurling vengeance on their opponents, by such statutory laws as are, and ever shall be, a disgrace to the records; this little plant was convincing men's minds that it was *not* a "dangerous, drastic, corrosive, narcotic and acrid poison," as they represented it to be—but really and truly a simple, efficient, and active agent, that was well calculated to relieve their sufferings; and traduced and maligned as it might be, was really and of a verity, one of Heaven's best gifts to his fallen creatures! Yes, and they were convinced of it, for in the face of all that the doctors and their friends could say to the contrary, they believed it, and those outrageous laws melted from the statute books like snow flakes before the rising sun, until none are now left in this whole broad land to tell the story of their ephemeral existence.

In this connection it may not be thought amiss for an old soldier in the cause to recount to young recruits the varying phases of the war, which since the time of Thomson has gone bravely on, with varying results, according as the method of attack or defence may have changed the features of the strife. At first, persecution was the order of the day, and personal intimidation in varied shapes, was the artillery of the enemy. Anon as State after State expunged the odious laws, they found their cannon spiked, and resorted to the small arms of detraction, slander and ridicule, but they found that "curses, like chickens, gener-

ally come home to roost," and ridicule, instead of proving potent in their hands, only exhibited the weakness of their cause and their want of ammunition. Anon they change their line of battle and take up a position at such an angle to the front of the reform column, as would enable them to slip over, without being noticed, and thus introduce an enemy into the camp, renewing in the latter days the ancient trick of the Trojan Horse, and almost with a like success, as we have seen exemplified in the rise of Eclecticism; but the scheme has failed, and the decline of Eclecticism—the ism of all the isms, that is all things to all men—is the evidence of its defeat. Anon a change comes o'er the spirit of their dream, they have made nothing by their attack with the great guns of the law, their detractions and slanders are refuted and lived down, they have been caught in the act of trying to steal our *thunder*, and their attempts at ridicule have only brough the *laugh* upon themselves. What now is to be done? Try the cavalry movement,—not to charge that seried hollow square of Reformers, oh no! but get upon the high horse of dignity, and ignore their presence. Let them say they, in Chinese style, be confounded by the majesty of our appearance, for as outside *Barbarians* they must tremble in our august presence.

But no! these outside barbarians were made of sterner stuff, and could not be so subdued. They had a way of their own of upsetting the equanimity of their pompous opponents, and through the rents of their cloaks of pretension exposed the nakedness within.

Reformers have hitherto, with slight exceptions, maintained a defensive attitude. It will now be necessary to change their tactics, and charge home upon the enemy. If hitherto error has pompously and unquestioned occupied high places, it must be driven hence. If quackery, having assumed the mantle of science, presumes to strut forth, jack-daw like, in borrowed plumage, tear off the mask, that the world may see and spurn the spectacle presented. Attack the strong holds of their power and fear them not

but proceed with the work of demolition. Within they have erected temples for the worship of strange gods, in which they have made altars of sacrifice, and their offerings are human victims. Press on, and if your nerves are strong enough, look upon this altar where that little innocent who has never been permitted to see the light lies sacrificed; see the blood and brains yet ooze from that great gash in its cranium, through which the spirit has taken flight. That innocent has fallen a victim to a science of torture and destruction that no barbarian savage of ancient or modern days has ever dreamed of. Blissful ignorance—may it long continue! But see, near by there is the mother, another victim to the same gory moloch!—Look at the room wherein has been enacted this awful tragedy, blood, blood upon the floor, the bed, the furniture; and there, too, are the instruments of torture, smeared like the arms of that demoniac Priest who officiates at the altar, the one almost a shamble, the other I had almost said a butcher! but no! he is a doctor, an Allopath, who pretending to save the mother's life, killed the child, and in the murderous effort slew the mother also, by penetrating the uterine wall, and lacerating the internal vitals.

Outstretched upon the next altar within this heathen temple, which it is our duty to destroy, we see another victim. There lays a man, who, a brief time since, was in the flower of his manhood, the support of a widowed mother, and the stay of a young wife and tender infant. Observe his swollen countenance, and that rotting sore that overspreads his cheek and jaw, from which has just dropped that great piece of mortified flesh, and those sound looking teeth, and from which that black and fetid blood still makes its way. He has been sacrificed to the god Mercury, whose appetite for human victims is not appeased, though millions upon millions have been offered on that altar, and millions more there be, who, through a harder fate, have been doomed to die a living death, living on and on, hoping to be relieved, and envious of that distorted victim's fate.

But looking farther we perceive another victim, pale and bloodless. That was a stalwart frame, albeit the venerable head is grey with years. The fine countenance seems familiar, it is the same that is graven on a nation's heart, and can never be eradicated from the memory. It is Washington! the Father of his country, who would have given his heart's blood freely for it, but has been forced instead, to yield it, not in moderation, but by the gallon, on that accursed altar, at the high behest of an adherent of a doctrine that is now exploded. What would America not have given to have saved the heart's blood of her hero?

There are other victims, however, upon those numerous altars, and gentlemen, I assure you they are not imaginary ones. Here, with a placid countenance, lies a venerable, aged form, an experienced dealer in poisons, which he considered medicines, having given so many that he himself became convinced of their utter harmlessness, for although he saw his trusting friends sink one by one into the silent grave, after partaking of his deadly agents, he never once supposed but that in *his hands* they were harmless as breast milk, but one became refractory and refused the draught. The Doctor, to convince him, took the dose, and there he lies, a victim to his trust in Prussic Acid. There beside him lies another who, fearful of the innocent Lobelia, and yet requiring an emetic, resorted to the deadly Antimony, and here he is, a sacrifice to prejudice and poison. There again we see the outstretched form of the coward heart, who, fearing the pain that is necessary to cure disease, allayed it with the deadly Morphine, which cured the pain and killed him at the same time, and added another to the thousands that have been sacrificed upon that same opoeatic altar. Here are human victims all around sacrificed without mercy by these demoniac Priests in human shape, who, vampire like, lull their victims with fine words and smooth speeches, until their last moment of time, and usher them before they have lived out half their days, into the dread presence of the great Judge, taking refuge in

the fact that dead men tell no tales, and the grave reveals no secrets, which enables them to continue this pestilential worship of those worse than heathen deities, to destroy whose temples and altars is the work set apart for the strong arm and stout heart of Medical Reform.

Ah! Gentlemen! If the Christian world have set itself the task of compassing the destruction of heathen gods and idols, and glories in the prospect of ultimately achieving its laudable purpose, in lands remote, and far removed from kindred association or sympathy, how much more ought we, who are so well convinced of the enormity of such practices as clearly tend to the sacrifice and destruction of those near and dear to us, to set ourselves the task of overturning them, nor take any rest until this great Jugger-naut that has been erected in our midst shall have been thrown from its place to rise no more, forever. To the work, then, friends! Poisons have had their day, and those who have dealt in them have shown no mercy. It is for us now to "carry the war into Africa" and rid the world of one of the greatest curses that has ever been permitted to afflict humanity.

But I have digressed, gentlemen, and must now return and treat of the properties of Lobelia, the consideration of which, however, must be deferred till my next Lecture, on *Materia Medica*.

